



Consistency, Clarity, and No Surprises: An Equation for Successful Performance Evaluation and Management

By Reba Yount

At times we hear phrases such as: “Performance evaluations don’t work.” or “Telling someone once a year how they are doing does not add value to their performance.” “Giving an employee feedback will not make a difference.”

Each of these phrases have likely been uttered on the CU Denver campus. And while these statements are not completely true, they do each hold some validity. Evaluations do work, when done well. Performance management and evaluation cannot be successful with only once a year feedback. And adjusting the occurrence of feedback with direct reports may indeed make a difference.

The antithesis to the misleading performance statements can be summed up in three quotes:

“Consistency is key.” - Tony Robbins

“Clear is kind.” - Glennon Doyle

and

“An annual evaluation delivery should not be a surprise.” - Teri Engelke

Consistency - *Nine Lies About Work: A Freethinking Leader’s Guide to the Real-World* authors Marcus Buckingham and Ashley Goodall note consistency is essential to successful performance management. They say it is not about length of meetings with direct reports, rather it is about frequency. Even 15-20 minutes weekly to check in can yield more response in performance than an hour-long meeting once a month. If you supervise someone, schedule a recurring meeting for at least 15 minutes with them every week, or 30 minutes every other week. If you can give an hour every week or every other week, it would be even better.

Clarity – Don’t be afraid to say the words “not meeting expectations”. If you do need to deliver a difficult message that expectations/responsibilities are not being met. Be clear about how they are not being met, give an example. Share what the expectation is in comparison to the example. Set a timeline for when the employee should be meeting expectations. Then build a path together to how improvement will be shown by the deadline. Then ensure you review progress, good or bad, together in your weekly or bi-weekly meetings.

Feedback – does not just have to be negative though; it can also be a vehicle for praise. Recognition and appreciation are also an important message to relay to an employee. In check ins, when reviewing mid-point performance, and at the summary of an evaluation period, if you have positive feedback to give, don’t be shy to share it. Everyone enjoys hearing they did something well.

No surprise – If you are utilizing the first two steps of this equation, by the time you get to the summary evaluation/merit rating meeting for an annual evaluation what you have to share with the employee should not come as a surprise. Additionally, if you have been clear and met consistently over the course



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of an evaluation period, pulling together your feedback to be shared with them should not take you long as you already have specific, measurable examples written down to give as to how they performed.

Be consistent. Be Clear. No surprises.

Want a tool to help you track meetings, check out a [new performance development and management tool](#) in the performance management corner of the HR website. For questions on performance management and evaluation reach out to workplaceengagement@ucdenver.edu.